weak or entirely lacking, that many associations are inaugurated only to disintegrate almost before they have begun, that reciprocal distrust exists, that most Chinese find it impossible to believe that the organizer is acting from sincere public spirit, that joint action is fully as often for destruction or self-protection as for public welfare, and that stable working-together for purposes of public value is discouragingly rare. All this is undoubtedly true and must be remembered in an appraisal of present day China. However, the successes in cooperation are also facts. The Chinese, like other peoples, often display contradictory traits.

THE STRATIFICATIONS OF SOCIETY

In spite of the strength of the family tie and of all these many organizations, Chinese society has been characterized by a remarkable minimum of hard and fast class divisions. The sharp distinction between the aristocrat and the commoner which seems to have existed at the dawn of China's history largely disappeared long ago, probably shattered in the prolonged disorders which brought the Chou dynasty to an end and further erased by the autocrats who built the Ch'in and the Han. An hereditary aristocracy was manifestly an obstacle to the absolutism which these latter sought to establish. The bureaucracy of the Ch'in displaced the old hereditary feudalism. Feudal states tended to appear once more during the initial years of the Han, but the creation by the monarchs of that dynasty, especially by Wu Ti, of a ruling bureaucracy appointment to which was on the basis of worth rather than birth checked the movement. The continued development under later dynasties of a system of choosing

officials from those who had proven their worth in the free competition of the public examinations militated against the formation of an hereditary ruling caste. At least under the Ch'ing these tests were open to the majority regardless of birth. Only members of a few occupations, such as actors, were excluded. Admission to the aristocracy of intellect which so dominated the life of the nation could be had by rich and poor alike. Incidentally, the entire family and even the city of a successful scholar shared in his fame. Under a system by which—in theory—wealth, social position, and power went to the ablest, a certain amount of fluidity existed and a general and continuous leveling process which discouraged class